

Preamble to the Recommendations

At its 1969 convention The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod comes to a significant juncture in its quest for Lutheran unity. We as a synod have come to this place along a course established by our fathers. Like them, we have pursued this quest in obedience to the will of God and in conformity with our position as evangelical Lutherans. We have attempted to proceed in concert, conducting our affairs in a churchly and responsible way. Our purpose has remained unchanged, for we have sought unity in doctrine in order that we might live together in fellowship.

In our quest for Lutheran unity we have been engaged in serious conversations with The American Lutheran Church. Our prolonged study and discussion has produced the conviction that we agree in the preaching of the Gospel "in conformity with the pure understanding of it" and in the administration of the sacraments "according to the divine Word." Our discussions have led us to the conviction that we are in the tradition of true Lutherans who are committed to the Holy Scriptures and who subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions. We are persuaded that we share a mutual desire to strengthen a united evangelical proclamation and to develop a consistently evangelical practice.

We believe that the Lord of the church in His grace has brought us to the time when we should give official and public recognition to the unity which exists between our Synod and The American Lutheran Church. It is time that we honor by public declaration and practice the recognition of another church body as a sister Lutheran church. It is time that we give witness to the blessed unifying power which the Gospel of grace in Christ Jesus has had among us. It is time that we sanction and bless the desire of many brethren to strengthen through altar and pulpit fellowship the oneness they have been led to discover. It is time that we accept joyfully and earnestly a greater responsibility to help one another as brethren.

These appropriate recommendations have been prepared under a directive of the Synod and after fervent prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It should be noted that these recommendations are not designed to create unity by persuasion or reason. Only God in His grace creates unity. By His Spirit He alone leads men to sense and live in fellowship. These recommendations seek to reflect our perception of God's unifying work among us and propose how we respond in a practical way for the edification and increase of the body of Christ.

Therefore we herewith respectfully recommend the following resolution to the honorable convention of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod assembled in Denver, Colorado, July 11—19, 1969.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, The Synod declared in 1967 that the Scriptural and confessional basis for altar and pulpit fellowship exists between The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod and The American Lutheran Church, this conclusion being based on a study of the churches' official doctrinal statements and on consultations held between duly chosen representatives of the churches; and

WHEREAS, In 1967 the Synod asked that meetings be held for promoting a wider mutual recognition of this doctrinal consensus and its implications for church fellowship, and these meetings of congregations, pastors, and officials generally confirmed the conclusion that the Scriptural and confessional basis for church fellowship exists; and

WHEREAS, It is incumbent on Christians who share consensus in their understanding and proclamation of the Gospel to confess their Lord with one mind and one voice and to live together in unity and mutual assistance; and

(over)

WHEREAS, The Synod recognizes that some diversities continue to exist, and efforts to work toward a unified evangelical position and practice on the basis of the Word of God have been fruitful; and

WHEREAS, It is the Synod's conviction that these diversities are not divisive of fellowship and that they are a matter primarily of pastoral care; and

WHEREAS, Churches are held to do all things decently and in good order, in this way giving a good account to the Lord of the church, to Christendom, and to the world, therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod express gratitude to God for creating this unity among us and for leading us to discover it; the Synod pledges to continue earnestly both to recognize and to strengthen this unity further; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod herewith formally declare itself to be in altar and pulpit fellowship with The American Lutheran Church; that this declaration serve to encourage those congregations and pastors of the synods who have discovered consensus which makes for a proper practice of fellowship, to assume the opportunities and obligations of church fellowship; that this declaration does not bind the consciences of those congregations and pastors who believe there is insufficient consensus to warrant their practice of altar and pulpit fellowship at this time, but that it does obligate them to continued study and discussion; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod reiterate the pledge made in the "Joint Statement and Declaration" to seek a unified evangelical position and practice on the basis of our commitment to the Gospel; that to this end the Synod proposes the creation of an intersynodical commission to assist in the proper understanding and practice of fellowship, to supply counsel and aid as a support to the pastoral ministries carried on in the synods, and to suggest appropriate means by which the members of the synods may grow in their understanding and practice of fellowship; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod authorize its president, in consultation with the president of The American Lutheran Church, to announce the establishment of altar and pulpit fellowship between their respective church bodies and to make suggestions for the appropriate implementation of the worthy purpose of this declaration.